United Nations A/60/181

General Assembly

Distr.: General
1 August 2005

Original: English

Sixtieth session
Item 62 of the provisional agenda*
Global road safety crisis

The global road safety crisis: progress on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 58/289

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits the report prepared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on the global road safety crisis in accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/289 of 14 April 2004.

* A/60/150.

05-44896 (E) 240805

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared by the World Health Organization (WHO) in consultation with a number of partners, provides an update on the status of implementation of the recommendations made in General Assembly resolution 58/289 on improving global road safety. The report reviews some of the global road safety events of 2004 to illustrate the considerable momentum that has been created in addressing this issue. It describes how the coordinating mandate conferred upon WHO through the adoption of the resolution led to the establishment of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration, a working group of 42 agencies committed to tackling road safety. The report describes the efforts of United Nations agencies and other organizations participating in the Collaboration to work within a common framework and provides examples of the ways in which these partners are working together on joint products to address road safety. It concludes by proposing a number of recommendations for the consideration of the General Assembly to accelerate the implementation of road safety activities around the world.

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–9	3
II.	United Nations Road Safety Collaboration	10–13	5
III.	Products of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration	14–27	6
	A. Data collection and research	14–15	6
	B. Provision of technical support	16–17	6
	C. Advocacy and policy	18–21	7
	D. Accessing financial support	22–24	8
	E. Improving cooperation among partner organizations	25–27	8
IV.	Conclusions and recommendations	28–36	9

I. Introduction

1. Road traffic injuries are a major public health problem and a leading cause of death and injury around the world. Each year nearly 1.2 million people die and millions more are injured or disabled as a result of road crashes, mostly in urban areas of developing countries. In addition to the enormous economic and social costs to individuals, families and communities, road traffic injuries place a heavy burden on national health services, in particular those of developing countries. Reducing road traffic injuries is important to the successful achievement of several of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to poverty, child mortality reduction and environmental sustainability.

2. Road traffic injuries can be prevented. There are a number of factors that have been identified as increasing the risk of traffic-related injuries, including inappropriate and excess speed, non-use of safety belts and child restraints, drinking and driving, non-use of helmets by riders of two-wheeled motorized vehicles, poorly designed or insufficiently maintained road infrastructure and vehicles that are old, not well maintained, or lacking in safety features. Regulatory and other actions addressed at tackling these risk factors have led to dramatic decreases in road crashes in many developed countries. Similarly, experience in many countries has led to the conclusion that the creation of a lead agency on road safety and an accurate assessment of a country's road safety situation are important steps that need to be taken to effectively tackle road traffic injuries. The international community must take the lead by assisting countries in identifying road safety interventions that have been shown to be effective and in implementing them in their own countries in a manner that is appropriate to each cultural setting.

3. On 22 May 2003, the General Assembly adopted resolution 57/309 on the global road safety crisis, highlighting the rapid increase in road traffic deaths, injuries and disabilities globally, the disproportionate fatality rate in developing countries and the negative impact of road traffic injuries on national and global economies and requesting the Secretary-General to submit a report on the global road safety crisis. The report of the Secretary-General (A/58/228) was submitted to the fifty-eighth session of the Assembly as requested. On 5 November 2003, the Assembly adopted resolution 58/9, calling, inter alia, for a special plenary meeting of the Assembly to be held on 14 April 2004 to increase awareness of the magnitude of the road traffic injury problem at a high level.

4. On 7 April 2004, the World Health Organization (WHO) dedicated World Health Day to the topic of road safety. Events to mark the day were held in over 130 countries and included initiatives organized by Governments, non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies, donors and the private sector. The goal of these events was to plan how to tackle the issue of road safety. More specifically, they aimed at raising awareness; stimulating new road safety legislation; creating organizations for road safety; and promoting further research. Many organizations that conducted regular road safety activities scheduled them to coincide with World Health Day in order to maximize their impact: for example, the Economic Commission for Europe designated the week around World Health Day 2004 as its fourth road safety week, with a campaign aimed at combating aggressive driving behaviour; the European Commission organized the first official signing event of the European Road Safety Charter in Dublin. The purpose of the Road Safety

Charter is to integrate civil society into the endeavour to reach the European Union target of halving the number of road deaths by 2010.

5. On World Health Day, WHO and the World Bank jointly launched the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*. The report stresses the role of many sectors in the prevention of road traffic injuries, describes the fundamental concepts of road traffic injury prevention, the impact of road traffic injuries and the major determinants and risk factors and highlights effective intervention strategies. As such, it serves as both an advocacy tool and a technical document, including six major recommendations on what countries can do to address the problem of road traffic injuries.

6. In its resolution 58/289, entitled "Improving global road safety", the General Assembly recognized the need for the United Nations system to support efforts to address the global road safety crisis. The resolution also commended WHO and the World Bank for the initiative of launching the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*, which contains a number of recommendations to guide road safety in countries. It invited WHO, working in close cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions, to act as coordinator on road safety issues within the United Nations system. In the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in submitting his report to the Assembly at the sixtieth session, to draw upon the expertise of the United Nations regional commissions as well as of WHO and the World Bank. Lastly, it underlined the need for a further strengthening of international cooperation, taking into account the needs of developing countries, to deal with issues of road safety.

7. The tabling of resolution 59/289 was spearheaded by Oman and sponsored by more than 50 Member States. Several speakers in the debate stressed the urgency of a global effort in tackling road safety and called for action underpinned by United Nations support. During the United Nations stakeholders forum, held the following day, representatives from non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academia and some Governments discussed these issues in more depth.

8. The following month, the World Health Assembly adopted its resolution WHA 57.10, in which it accepted the General Assembly's invitation for WHO to act as the coordinator on road safety issues. The resolution on road safety and health also called upon Member States to prioritize road safety as a public health issue and to take steps to implement measures that are known to be effective in reducing road traffic injuries.

9. The events of early 2004 have generated substantial momentum globally towards addressing road safety. As a result, many Governments have declared their support for road safety initiatives, a number of non-governmental organizations have launched or strengthened their activities in this area and there has been an increase in the financial resources targeted at efforts to reduce road traffic injuries. Within the United Nations system itself, a number of agencies have used this momentum to initiate or accelerate programmes aimed at reducing road traffic injuries.

II. United Nations Road Safety Collaboration

10. In accordance with the coordination mandate conferred upon it by the General Assembly, over the last year, WHO, working closely with the Economic Commission for Europe and other regional commissions, has facilitated the development of a group of United Nations and other international road safety organizations now referred to as the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration. As of March 2005, this group was comprised of 11 United Nations entities, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), WHO, the World Bank, the World Food Programme and all five regional commissions. Thirty-one other international agencies working in road safety, with a broad range of skills and experience, are also represented. The number and range of sectors represented by participating organizations (Governments, non-governmental organizations, donors, research agencies and the private sector) from the transport, health and safety sectors attest to the broad support for this collaborative effort.

11. To date, the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration has met twice. The first meeting took place at WHO headquarters in Geneva on 1 October 2004, and the second meeting, on 16 and 17 March 2005, took place at the United Nations Office at Geneva. Representatives from 42 organizations have attended the two meetings,[1] which have allowed the participants to share their experiences and expertise in road safety. In addition, the sessions have been used constructively to allow the group to articulate and refine a goal and framework for effective collaboration. Specifically, the goal of the Collaboration is: to facilitate international cooperation (including at a regional level) among United Nations agencies and other international partners to implement General Assembly resolution 58/289 and the recommendations of the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention* and thereby support country programmes. A number of objectives to meet this goal have also been identified. These are: to assess the road safety situation and existing national facilities to address the problem; to develop guidance and support for effective road safety interventions; to provide capacity development on road safety issues; to advocate for and encourage demand for road safety; to strengthen global and regional coordination on road safety; and to improve the safety of fleets of United Nations vehicles for all road users.

12. Through discussions in the two meetings, the group has also identified a number of specific products (see sect. III below), the development of which will be directly relevant to achieving the predefined objectives, and has also articulated responsibilities and time frames for the process of developing these products.

13. At the second meeting in March 2005, the participants began to define a common framework for collaboration, in which the skills of all the agencies involved can be harnessed and collectively applied. It was also decided to concentrate considerable efforts on addressing a few specified effective interventions related to helmet wearing, inappropriate and excessive speed, drinking and driving, the use of safety belts and child restraints and cost-effective infrastructural changes.

III. Products of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration

A. Data collection and research

14. In 2005, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) Joint Transport Research Committee launched a working group project to achieve ambitious road safety targets. Members of the international working group are drawn from member countries of OECD/ECMT and from international organizations. The project will focus on research aimed at: assisting high-level decision-making on road safety priorities; identifying the progress required to meet national targets; analysing the funding of road safety measures; and describing issues concerning resource allocation. The study will then draw research-based conclusions on suggested best approaches to achieving the required further reductions in fatalities and on the required levels of funding and allocating resources to prevention and dealing with the consequences.

15. WHO has developed an online global road safety legislation database, building on the comprehensive work already undertaken for the European region by the Economic Commission for Europe Working Party on Road Traffic Safety. The database provides information on legislation targeting a number of factors that are important for road traffic injury prevention, including speed limits, safety belts and child restraint laws, helmet laws, blood alcohol limits, daytime running light requirements and mobile phone laws. The database is searchable by region, country and risk factor and links to other informative or legislative documents that can be found on the Internet. The database is located on the WHO website and will be updated regularly, through contributions from partner organizations.

B. Provision of technical support

16. Partners in the Road Safety Collaboration are producing a series of "how to" manuals that will provide guidance to countries on how to implement some of the recommendations identified in the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*. These will be practical, user-friendly manuals that will provide step-by-step guidance on the implementation of specific interventions. The development of the manuals will be led by the World Bank, WHO, the Global Road Safety Partnership and the Féderation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) Foundation for the Automobile and Society but will also incorporate expertise from the broad collaborative group. The documents will be produced using a standard template and one agency will take the lead on producing each of the manuals. At this stage, six manuals are planned: four of these will be on the key risk factors identified in the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention* — inappropriate and excessive speed, drinking and driving, safety belts and child restraints and helmets — while the other two will address the creation of a lead agency on road safety and traffic and injury data collection. Additional manuals may be developed over time.

17. The Working Party on Road Traffic Safety of the Economic Commission for Europe is currently revising the consolidated resolutions on road traffic and on road signs and signals. These resolutions build on the 1968 Vienna Conventions on Road Traffic and Road Signs and Signals and the European agreements supplementing them. The resolutions provide measures and practices to be implemented by member

States and include measures to address: traffic rules; alcohol; speed; communication and education; training; infrastructure development; technical inspections for vehicles; and recommendations for specific target groups, such as pedestrians, persons with restricted mobility, cyclists, motorcyclists and children. The current revisions, which are applied by countries on a voluntary basis, take into account the situation in as many countries as possible in order to make the resolutions applicable throughout the world. As part of its revisions to the consolidated resolutions, the Working Party has developed questionnaires on topics such as seatbelt programmes, motorcycle and moped safety programmes and controlling alcohol-impaired driving for distribution to members of the Working Party. These questionnaires will also be distributed by the Working Party and WHO to the other economic regional commissions so that data on these issues can be collected and summarized for countries outside of the Economic Commission for Europe.

C. Advocacy and policy

18. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union and the Sub-Saharan African Transport Policy Programme jointly organized a meeting of African experts on 4 and 5 April 2005 and another meeting of African transport ministers on 6 April 2005 to consider the role of transport in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Both meetings highlighted the importance of road safety within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals.

19. The European Federation of Road Traffic Victims and RoadPeace are working to establish a World Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims in recognition of road traffic victims and their family's loss and suffering. A day of remembrance was declared in 1993 by RoadPeace, a British charity dedicated to supporting road crash victims. Since 1994, the third Sunday in November has been observed as the European Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims with religious and secular events held in participating countries. In 2004, the World Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims took place in Argentina, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, South Africa and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

20. Following the first United Nations stakeholders' forum, which was held in New York, the day after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 58/289 on road safety, the Task Force for Child Survival and Development, with support from several agencies in the global road safety steering committee, planned a sustained advocacy campaign in order to contribute to building political will and creating demand for road safety. Advocacy of this nature is seen as instrumental in mobilizing the resources that developing countries will need to respond to the global road safety crisis and carry out the recommendations of the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*.

21. Since 1990, the Economic Commission for Europe Working Party on Road Traffic Safety has held four road safety weeks for its 55 member countries. The aim of the campaigns has been to influence the behaviour of road users in order to reduce the number and severity of road crashes and save lives. At its session in March 2005, the Working Party agreed to widen the scope of the fifth Road Safety Week to a global level, to hold it in 2007 and to focus on young road users. At the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration meeting, held in March 2005, this proposal was also agreed to. This global road safety campaign of 2007 is expected

to mobilize all actors concerned in both the public and private sector as well as at the local, national and international level. The regional commissions will participate actively in this global road safety campaign and encourage countries in their regions to organize national road safety campaigns related to the theme selected.

D. Accessing financial support

22. Despite the existence of cost-effective interventions, the lack of financial resources is a major obstacle to increasing road safety substantially. In addition to the efforts conducted by some foundations and bilateral and multilateral donors during the past years, a few promising initiatives are under way. It is important to point out, however, that despite these additional efforts, the number of bilateral and multilateral donors or private foundations that support road safety remains far from sufficient to address current and future needs.

23. Taking up the challenge of United Nations and World Health Assembly resolutions to assist developing countries in the area of road safety, the World Bank is currently investigating the establishment of a global road safety facility. The objective of this initiative is to create a fund to support those areas of global road safety for which there are currently limited resources. Globally, these areas include coordination, research and development of tools and products; nationally, they include the development of capacities, road safety strategies and national projects. As currently conceived, the three-year project will disburse $5 million through two separate funding streams, one for global work and one for national work. The initiative will initially be managed by the World Bank, with advisory input from a number of partner organizations.

24. The global road safety initiative, a partnership of seven private sector companies, was launched in December 2004. The initiative results from the work of the World Business Council on Sustainable Development Sustainable Mobility Group and is being facilitated and implemented by the Global Road Safety Partnership. The initiative is a five-year, $10 million project aimed at reducing road traffic fatalities in several developing countries through targeting key road safety themes, training road safety professionals and providing seed money to support pilot programmes to improve road safety.

E. Improving cooperation among partner organizations

25. At the second meeting of the Road Safety Collaboration in March 2005, it was proposed that the group define a framework within which to work. This involved categorizing the objectives that had been defined and setting these against tasks to be fulfilled. In this way, the areas of work/issues that need to be addressed can be identified. It was also proposed at this meeting that the Collaboration needed to focus more on the implementation of targeted actions. Recognizing the reference to the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention* in General Assembly resolution 58/289, it was agreed that at this first stage, the group should concentrate its efforts on addressing several of the risk factors identified in the report, where important gains could be made. These include: the use of safety belts and child restraints; the wearing of motorcycle helmets; taking action to reduce incidents of inappropriate

and excessive speed and drinking and driving; and taking into account low-cost infrastructural measures.

26. Following the first meeting of the Road Safety Collaboration, a resource to the activities and experience of those involved was produced, entitled "The United Nations Road Safety Collaboration: a handbook of partner profiles". The document reflects the road safety profiles of partner organizations that participated in the first meeting, containing an overview of each organization's road safety activities, and provides contacts for focal points to facilitate communication. This overview of activities being conducted in road safety at a global level should help to identify gaps and possible areas of collaboration. As more organizations are expected to join the Collaboration at follow-up meetings, the first version of the handbook should be seen as a snapshot of a changing group of agencies. Reflecting a dynamic collaboration, the handbook will be updated on a regular basis according to the involvement of partner organizations and their activities. It is hoped that the document will provide a valuable resource to those working or intending to work in road safety.

27. The meetings of the Road Safety Collaboration have allowed smaller groups with common interests to meet separately and discuss road safety issues. Notably, at the March meeting, interested delegates met with representatives from the regional commissions for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Asia and Europe to discuss ways in which partners could better assist the commissions, some of which struggle to maintain road safety activities despite very limited funding. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia used the opportunity to request technical assistance to host a regional road safety meeting in 2005, involving 13 of its member countries. The forum also provided a valuable opportunity for the regional commissions to solicit input on planned road safety activities. For example, the Economic Commission for Africa plans to carry out a study documenting best practices in road safety, involving African ministers of transport and working jointly with the African Union and the African Development Bank.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

28. **Road safety remains a neglected and growing public health and development issue. To date, the issue has not received the levels of attention and resources commensurate with the magnitude of the problem. As a number of countries are on the cusp of making significant transport investments, careful consideration should be given to relative costs and benefits of different types of transport, including safety issues.**

29. **Nevertheless, over the past year, there has been increasing consensus around the globe on the need to address road traffic injuries as a global public health problem. This awareness has been matched by an unprecedented momentum in taking concrete actions to address road safety, both at the international and national levels. World Health Day 2004, the launch of the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*, the passing of two road safety resolutions and road safety activities that were spurred by these events around the world over the past year all attest to growing awareness and commitment.**

30. **Within the United Nations system, many agencies have leveraged the events of the last year to start new, or to highlight existing, road safety**

activities. The regional commissions have accelerated or expanded their road safety activities while other agencies, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), have recognized that road traffic injuries are a major problem among their employees, and are thus interested in addressing this issue from a health and safety perspective. The last year has also shown a new level of willingness among international organizations to collaborate on joint initiatives, as evidenced by the support for the United Nations road safety collaboration.

31. Despite progress in addressing the issue of road safety collectively within and beyond the United Nations system, the actions described above are only preliminary steps and much remains to be done. In the countries in which road safety has been put firmly on the political agenda, it is important that the momentum gained not be lost. In countries where road safety is neglected, the international community needs to find ways to encourage efforts to reduce road traffic injuries and to make national Governments aware of the need to integrate road safety into their transport and health policies.

32. Establishing the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration is an attempt to bring together a diverse but complementary group of agencies with a common commitment to reducing road traffic injuries. It is expected that this endeavour will facilitate cooperation among partners, thereby minimizing the overlap of efforts and maximizing effect. Identifying objectives and strategies towards achieving these objectives are concrete steps towards the achievement of the group's overall goal.

33. By engaging groups that have historically not been very active in road safety in these global dialogues on road safety, one output of the Collaboration has been the identification of new opportunities through the different skills and resources that partner agencies have brought to the group.

34. Mobilizing resources remains a concern for many organizations involved in global and national road safety efforts, as the level of funding targeted at reducing road traffic injuries is far from commensurate with the scale of the problem. Furthermore, the long-term financial planning necessitated by some organizational structures, such as the regional commissions, makes it challenging for them to add new unfunded road safety programmes to their predefined long-term workplans.

35. The coordination mandate on road safety has rapidly extended beyond the United Nations system to include a total of 42 organizations. The task of coordinating such a group is large and requires the investment of appropriate human and financial resources. The request from the General Assembly was unfunded and it has been necessary for WHO to find funding from other sources to support its coordination role. The assistance and continuing support provided by the FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of the Netherlands, Michelin and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for the first year of the coordination process are gratefully acknowledged. However, plans for future meetings and expanded activities mean that funding needs to be secured for the upcoming years. Providing funds to the United Nations regional commissions is also crucial in order to ensure their active contribution to improving road safety in their regions.

36. **It is envisaged that there will be future meetings held on a biannual basis, similar to the two already organized by WHO. The next meeting, which is to be held in the United Kingdom, has been scheduled for November 2005. Between meetings, WHO aims to facilitate communication through newsletters that update participants on relevant road safety initiatives and through regular contacts with participants. Participating agencies will further develop and implement the collaboration on a project basis.**

37. **It is therefore recommended that the General Assembly:**

(a) **Reaffirm its commitment to addressing the global road safety crisis;**

(b) **Reaffirm its desire that WHO continue in its role as coordinator of road safety within the United Nations system, working in close collaboration with the United Nations regional commissions, encourage Member States to support these road safety efforts and facilitate their ability to obtain financial, political and technical support;**

(c) **Recognize and encourage existing or new road safety initiatives by the relevant United Nations agencies and international partners;**

(d) **Call upon Member States to develop work programmes in road safety, noting that these programmes should be seen to be profitable investments for Governments to undertake;**

(e) **Encourage Member States to include road safety within their projects aimed at tackling the Millennium Development Goals;**

(f) **Encourage Member States to pay particular attention to risk factors such as the non-use of safety belts and child restraints, the non-use of helmets, drinking and driving, inappropriate and excessive speed, as well as to the development of appropriate infrastructure by passing and enforcing legislation, conducting necessary awareness raising campaigns and putting in place appropriate methods to monitor and evaluate interventions that are implemented;**

(g) **Encourage Member States to continue using the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention* as a framework for road safety efforts and implementing its recommendations, including the establishment of a lead agency on road safety and the development of a national action plan to reduce road traffic injuries;**

(h) **Encourage Member States to become parties to the Conventions on Road Traffic and Road Signs and Signals and to bring their national legislation into conformity with those Conventions in order to ensure a high level of road safety in their countries;**

(i) **Call upon Member States and the international community to recognize the World Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims, thereby signalling the appropriate level of acknowledgement that should be awarded to victims of road traffic crashes and their families, while helping to raise media interest and encouraging appropriate actions by Governments in addressing road safety;**

(j) **Call upon Member States and the international community to support and participate actively in the global Road Safety Week in 2007;**

(k) Request that the Secretary-General report to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

Notes

[1] Asian Development Bank, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Association for Safe International Road Travel, Associations des Constructeurs Européens d'Automobiles, Bone and Joint Decade, European Commission, European Federation of Road Traffic Victims, FIA Foundation for the Automobile and Society, Fleet Forum, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, Global Impact, Global Road Safety Partnership, Institute of Transport Economics, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers, International Road Federation, International Road Transport Union, LaserEurope (L'Action de sécurité routière en Europe), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of the Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Mission of Oman to the United Nations, Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development/European Conference of Ministers of Transport, Prevention Routière Internationale, RoadPeace, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Swedish Road Administration, Task Force for Child Survival and Development, Transport Canada: Road Safety and Motor Vehicle Registration Directorate, Transport Research Laboratory, UNICEF, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), UNHCR, United States Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Bank, WHO, World Road Association.